

EPI Update for Friday May 20, 2005
Center For Acute Disease Epidemiology
Iowa Department of Public Health

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- **Musings on Keeping Memorial Day Safe and Healthy**

Summer Food Safety

Summer Water Safety Tips

- **May is Hepatitis Awareness Month - Hepatitis C**
- **Meeting Announcements and Training Opportunities**

Musings on Keeping Memorial Day Safe and Healthy

Since Memorial Day marks the unofficial beginning of summer, we offer the following standard guidance to help everyone prepare for a safe and healthy summer.

Summer Food Safety

Cookouts and picnics are great summertime activities, but they can also increase your risk of getting food-borne illness if you are not careful. The rule of thumb is to keep cold foods cold (40 degrees or below), and hot foods hot (140degrees or above). Foods can be kept cold by keeping them in a cooler or by using ice or commercial freezing gel packets. Hot food can be kept in an insulated container. Make sure raw meats are kept at at least 155 degrees. Hand washing, using warm water, soap and rubbing hands for as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice or the "ABC's" song is always important, especially after using the bathroom (or outhouse or bushes). Always wash hands before you handle foods. If soap and water are not available, use commercially available alcohol-based hand gels.

Summer Water Safety Tips

As summer and warmer weather approaches, many Iowans will seek relief by participating in outdoor activities including boating and swimming. Public health recommends Iowans follow these water safety tips:

Swimming--

- Never swim alone, no matter how good a swimmer you are.
- Watch children constantly when they are in or near the water.
- Inflatable toys are no substitute for swimming skills.

- Alcohol and swimming is a deadly combination. Around 50 percent of drowning
- victims had been drinking alcohol.

Boating--

- Always use approved personal flotation devices (life jackets).
- Don't jump or dive into unknown bodies of water.
- Never consume alcohol when operating a boat or other watercraft. Alcohol is involved in about half of all boating fatalities.
- Know the local weather conditions and forecast before boating.
- Know your limits. Even without drinking, four hours exposure to sun, wind, watercraft noise and vibrations, impair your reaction time almost as much as if you were drunk.

Preventing waterborne diseases--

- Don't swim when you have diarrhea. This is especially important for kids in diapers.
- Don't swallow the water.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet or after changing diapers.
- Take your kids on bathroom breaks often.
- Change diapers in a bathroom and not at poolside.
- Wash your child thoroughly with soap and water before swimming.

Remember that water safety also involves preventing recreational water illnesses. Many of us forget that organisms such as Crypto, Giardia, E. coli 0157:H7 and Shigella are spread by swimming in contaminated water, such as swimming pools, water parks, lakes and oceans. The first **National Recreational Water Illness Prevention Week** is May 23-30, 2005

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5419a7.htm>

May is Hepatitis Awareness Month - Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C is a blood borne pathogen; the most prevalent mode of transmission is sharing needles or syringes to inject drugs. Blood transfusions pose an extremely limited risk today. For those patients who received a blood transfusion prior to July 1992, the risk was approximately one in 200 transfused units. Sexual transmission of hepatitis C does occur, but does not appear to be an efficient mode of transmission. Other potential risks for transmission include long-term hemodialysis, sharing straws for intranasal cocaine use, vertical (mother-to-infant) transmission, occupational blood exposure and tattooing or body piercing with non-sterilized equipment. Hepatitis C is not spread via casual contact, kissing, sneezing, hugging, breast milk and sharing glasses or utensils.

The state of Iowa has an estimated 52,943 cases of hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection, based on 2001 projected census information. Between January 1999 and March 2005, a total of 9,212 HCV cases were identified in the state. This accounts for 17 percent of projected cases.

Unfortunately, the majority of those infected with HCV do not know they are infected. About 80 percent of people have no signs or symptoms when the infection first develops. Infected individuals may have HCV for up to 10 to 20 years before they are aware or symptoms are recognized. In 75 to 85 percent of those infected, the virus persists in the body and the person develops chronic infection. Chronic HCV develops into chronic liver disease in 70 percent of those infected. Twenty percent of those chronically infected develop liver cirrhosis. Approximately three to five percent of HCV patients develop liver cancer. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately 8,000-10,000 deaths each year in the United States are attributed to HCV.

HCV was first identified in 1989 as a distinctive organism that causes hepatitis. Prior to this time it was known only as hepatitis that differed from hepatitis A and hepatitis B and was called “non-A, non-B hepatitis.” A laboratory detection test became available for use in July 1992. People most at risk of having and/or for acquiring HCV infection include:

- Persons who have ever injected drugs, even once in their lifetime;
- Injecting drug users who share needles or other equipment;
- Persons who received blood transfusions or organ transplants prior to July 1992;
- Persons who received clotting factor from plasma produced before 1987;
- Persons who have ever been on long-term kidney dialysis;
- Persons with undiagnosed liver problems;
- Health care or emergency workers after known exposure to HCV positive blood;
- Children born to HCV- positive women.

Unfortunately, there is no vaccine currently available for hepatitis C. If you are concerned that you may be infected with hepatitis C virus, consult with your health care provider about a blood test. Eight county public health agencies provide hepatitis C testing at no charge for clients at risk due to current or past history of injecting drug use.

[Hepatitis C Testing at Eight Local Health Departments](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/common/pdf/hepatitis/hep_c_testing_sites.pdf)

[<http://www.idph.state.ia.us/common/pdf/hepatitis/hep_c_testing_sites.pdf>](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/common/pdf/hepatitis/hep_c_testing_sites.pdf)

For more information on viral hepatitis, visit the [Iowa Department of Public Health Hepatitis Program Website](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/hepatitis.asp) [<http://www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/hepatitis.asp>](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/hepatitis.asp).

Meeting Announcements and Training Opportunities

“Iowa Immunization Conference - Immunization Works”

The conference includes topic such as:

- Future Vaccines
- ACIP Recommendations
- Vaccine Shortages
- Varicella Case Based Reporting
- Vaccine Infrastructure

June 2, 2005

Hy-Vee Conference Center

5820 Westown Parkway, WDM, IA

For additional information

<<[<http://www.trainingresources.org/displayconvspecific.cfm?convnbr=1464>>](http://www.trainingresources.org/displayconvspecific.cfm?convnbr=1464)>> or call 515-309-3315.

EPI Update for Friday May 21, 2005

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Addendum

As some of you may have noticed there was an error in our Friday Epi Update in the section on "Summer Food Safety". This was the result of a cutting and pasting error and we apologize. Kudos to those who caught our error. The paragraph on "Summer Food Safety" should read as follows:

Summer Food Safety

Cookouts and picnics are great summertime activities, but they can also increase your risk of getting food-borne illness if one is not careful. The rule of thumb is to keep cold foods cold (40 degrees or below), and hot foods hot (140 degrees or above). Foods can be kept cold by keeping them in a cooler or by using ice or commercial freezing gel packets. Hot food can be kept in an insulated container. Make sure raw meats are kept separate from ready-to-eat foods in the cooler. Discard any food left out at room or outdoor temperature for more than two hours, since bacteria can grow quickly at these temperatures. When grilling meats, be sure that all meat is cooked until there is no pink left and that all meat juices run clear (not pink and cloudy). The best method is to use a thermometer to ensure the internal temperature of the ground meat is at least 155 degrees. See the link below for the proper internal temperatures to cook other meats. Hand washing, using warm water, soap and rubbing hands for as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice or the "ABC's" song is always important, especially after using the bathroom (or outhouse or bushes). Always wash your hands before you handle foods. If soap and water are not available, use commercially available alcohol-based hand gels. If your hands have visible dirt on them, choose soap and water over alcohol-based hand gels, if both are available.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety Facts:
<http://www.foodsafety.gov/~fsg/fs-cook.html>

Again, our apologies and have a great week!